



# Inside CFSA

For Our Child-Serving Community

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## DC Licenses Independent Living Programs

As reported in the August edition of *Inside CFSA*, the process for improving group care facilities via licensing continues to bring significant reform to CFSA's group care facilities. In this issue, we will focus primarily on Independent Living Programs, which provide a wide range of services to current and former foster youth aged 16 to 21. These services include life skills training, preparation for college and vocational training, financial support, counseling, housing assistance, specialized training, socialization activities and individualized services.

More than 15 years into the making, licensing is a critical step in CFSA's effort to improve the quality of service for teens placed in youth residential facilities. All programs have been required to meet standards for staffing, facilities, and service delivery that help improve the safety and well-being of District youth. No youth residential facility will be permitted to operate after January 1 without a license.

With regulations and procedures in place, teen residents can expect a system that will hear them, respond to their needs, and ensure a safe experience in the independent living and group-care programs. Such regulations will also ensure young adults such as Nicole and Sherrell can enjoy better living situations.

**Nicole**, 20, completed Nurse Assistant training last year and passed the certification exam. She has worked in the field of nursing since July 2001 and plans to continue her nursing training by enrolling in the Licensed Practical Nursing program at Prince George's Community College. When Nicole learned that the regulations would ensure a safe living environment and improvements in the quality of living for her peers, she stated, "I think [licensing] is a good idea because most of the time, when kids express their concerns, no one listens to them. But now that it is required by law that's good. It makes us feel like we matter."

**Sherrell**, 21, was recently emancipated and works as a bookkeeper for Based in Love Ministries. She stated, "I agree with the regulations, and I know its going to be helpful, making sure we are safe." Sherrell wants to own a home and run a daycare business from it. When asked about the regulations mandating furnishings and supplies, Sharrell stated, "It has saved me some extra money. It's one thing we don't have to worry about, and that's a good feeling." Additionally, new regulations require that teens in group care receive a minimum monthly stipend of \$500. Also, teens in independent living are required to receive a minimum of \$1,200 a month to offset the cost for monthly apartment rentals and utility fees. Prior to new regulations independent living stipends varied. "It will be good... and helpful if [the government] follows through on it," said Sherrell.

CFSA officials reported that seven facilities have been licensed. "CFSA's primary objective has been to insure improvement in the quality of services to youth placed in independent living programs. Since this is the first time that the District has licensed these facilities, it has been a struggle to assure that programs come into compliance with regulations. We expect that the process will become smoother next year when we relicense," stated Sharlynn Bobo, Deputy Director for Licensing, Monitoring and Placement Support Services. Each facility is required to make specific program improvements within a 90-day period. Three licensing options are available to CFSA contractors for each applicant seeking licensing:

- ♦ A one-year **original** license, meaning that a program meets all requirements;
- ♦ A **provisional** license, issued for up to two 90-day periods, meaning that CFSA believes that the applicant will fully comply with the requirements within the designated period; and
- ♦ A one-time **restricted** license that permits an applicant to operate, with some restrictions on admissions and services, for up to 90 days.

## Community Donations Brighten Holidays for Foster Children

About 1000 foster children received toys and gifts from over 30 donors. Several weeks prior to Dec. 25th, CFSA's Office of Volunteer Services and other staff worked tirelessly to pick up, sort, and distribute hundreds of gifts. **The One by One Foundation** donated thousands of toys. **ISES and Cole, Raywid & Braverman** gave hundreds of toys, as well, just to name a few of our outstanding toy donors. Donations included dolls, bicycles, DVD players, televisions, stereos, video games and more. Other generous gifts included food baskets donated and delivered by the **Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.** and several separate holiday parties for foster children sponsored by **Mayor Anthony Williams and the Washington Wizards, Howard University National Chapter of the Collegiate Scholars and WHUR. Soul World Entertainment** sponsored a holiday party while also affording foster children an opportunity to meet members of the **B2K** group, one of the latest R & B hip-hop teen groups presently on tour across the country. CFSA staff, children and families are sincerely grateful for those who donated to the District's foster children this year including: **USAID; Rev. Mary Lyons; Sara Gold; Cherneil Brown; Adele Cobbs; Biotechnology; Fried Frank; Howrey, Simon, Arnold & White; Armed Forces DNA Lab; Metro; Air & Space Museum; Dean Ryan Corporation ; IEEE Computer Society; Swidler, Berlin, Shereff & Friedman; Doing It God's Way Ministry; Model Cities Senior Wellness Center; Blended and Adopted Family Ministry; BAE Systems; Cassidy & Associates; ...and all our donors not listed. ■**